Memo cites JFK autopsy doctor

By EARL GOLZ

The Navy commander who wrote the controversial autopsy report in the assassination of President John F. Kennedy also was being considered for a possible exhumation of the body of Lee Harvey Oswald by the Warren Commission in 1964.

Dr. James J. Humes' name appeared in a memo written by David Slawson, an assistant counsel for the Warren Commission, on March 17, 1964, four months after the assassination.

Humes' autopsy report is a central issue in a new book asserting Kennedy's body was physically altered hours after the assassination to make it appear all shots came from behind. The book *Best Evidence* was written by David S. Lifton and is scheduled to be released Tuesday.

The Slawson memo was included among other items in a document entitled "Questions to Ask Norman Redlich," another assistant counsel for the Warren Commission. The handwritten item began with "Subject: Exhuming Oswald." It then stated Humes' name and telephone number at Bethesda Naval Hospital in Maryland, where the Kennedy autopsy was performed.

"Above is a doctor who Arlen Specter says is competent and trustworthy," Slawson wrote.

Specter, in 1964 an assistant counsel with the Warren Commission, is now the newly elected senator from Pennsylvania. Slawson is a law professor at UCLA and Humes is in private medical practice in Detroit.

So far as is publicly known, the body in Oswald's grave at Rose Hill Burial Park in Fort Worth never was exhumed. English author Michael Eddowes is now embroiled in a legal battle to exhume the body to determine whether Oswald or a Russian spy who impersonated Oswald is buried in the grave.

Oswald exhumation discussions by the federal government in the months after the assassination were kept secret, but some were revealed years later under Freedom of Information Act requests.

Slawson told *The Dallas Morning News* Friday that he didn't even want to listen to what he wrote about an Oswald exhumation in 1964 "because after 16 or 17 years it's not fair" to expect him to intelligently comment.

"I undoubtedly wrote it if it's there and under my signature," he said. "But what's that going to mean? I really don't want to speculate . . . Now it's just really faded too far."

Humes told *The News* earlier last week that Oswald "died in Dallas and I was still in the Navy at Bethesda and I don't know anything about it . . . I had absolutely no knowledge of the subject (possible Oswald exhumation) you are talking about."

The Central Intelligence Agency in March of 1964 was suspicious of the body buried in Oswald's grave, but not because the agency thought it wasn't Oswald.

Another Warren Commission memo at the time said FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover was reluctant to exhume the body "to examine the alleged scar on his (Oswald's) left wrist, as requested by the CIA."

The memo continued the CIA was interested in the scar "because one of the crucial points in Oswald's experiences in the Soviet Union was an alleged suicide attempt (shortly after his defection in 1959) by him when he is supposed to have deeply slashed his left wrist. If the suicide is a fabrication, the time supposedly spent by Oswald in recovering from the suicide (attempt) in a Moscow hospital could have been spent by him in Russian secret police custody being coached, brainwashed, etc., for his appearance at the American embassy."

Humes has been the target of assassination critics for years. They accuse him of writing a false autopsy report on the Kennedy death to make the medical evidence fit the thesis that Oswald was a lone assassin.

In his new book, Lifton detailed evidence indicating that Kennedy's body was physically altered in the nine hours between the time it left Parkland Memorial Hospital in Dallas and arrived for an autopsy at Bethesda, Md. Lifton writes that Humes should not be chastised for his autopsy report because the body already was a "medical forgery" by the time it reached him.